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Letter dated 3 February 1993 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Yugoslavia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith a document of the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia entitled "Human rights violations and incitement of inter-ethnic hatred in the media campaign against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia" (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as an official document of the General Assembly, under the item entitled "Elimination of racism and racial discrimination", and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Dragomir DJOKIĆ
Ambassador
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

ANNEX

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AND INCITEMENT OF INTER-ETHNIC HATRED IN THE MEDIA CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA

The Government of the FR of Yugoslavia, recalling that media have an important role in promoting peace and international understanding in opposing war, dissemination of prejudice, misinformation, incitement of national and religious hatred or discrimination of any kind; and that they should contribute to the elimination of misunderstanding among nations, making citizens of a country sensitive to the needs of those of other countries and ensuring respect for and dignity of all nations, warns that, before and during the Yugoslav crisis, and particularly since the outbreak of the armed conflicts, continued propaganda of moral and political disqualification of the Serbian people and false presentation of the actual activities of the FR of Yugoslavia, i.e. Republics of Serbia and Montenegro, and its highest authorities and officials, have been conducted.

I

We wish, in particular, to point to the current escalation of such propaganda in some countries which is especially perilous in the present period crucial for the termination of war and negotiations on a just and peaceful settlement of the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The latest propaganda campaign conducted, for example, in the German media against the FR of Yugoslavia and the Serbian people as a whole has culminated in the statements by CDU MP Stefan Schwarz which, by the brutality of accusations, no longer represent propaganda but borders on psychopathology (implanting of a dog embryo in Moslem women, burning of children in furnaces, etc.). It is a fact that these incredible allegations are being accepted and spread through influential TV broadcasts and the press (the campaign is being moved to the Netherlands and the USA).

Such a degree of demonization of a nation creates mass prejudice, a strong resentment of Serbs, which, inter alia, directly harms peace efforts of the FR of Yugoslavia and other factors concerned in achieving a final, lasting and just outcome to the Yugoslav tragedy.

The Yugoslav public has received with regret and indignation the one-sided and offensive reports, which have been published for a long time in a part of the French press, including the anti-Serbian propaganda on French TV (statement by the former President of the E. P. Simonne Veil in favour of military intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina). They have been joined by humanitarian organizations "Doctors without Frontiers" and "Doctors of the World". It was publicly said that 11 million francs were

carmarked for this campaign, for propaganda full of lies against a traditional friend - Serbia and its Government and President, which is incompatible with the goals and ethics of humanitarian organizations.

The fierceness of such campaign attributing dark symbols of the past to the leaders of a country (offensive identification of the President of the Republic of Serbia with Hitler, uncorroborated accusations against the FR of Yugoslavia and the Serbian side concerning the concentration camps similar to the Nazi ones, etc.) can, unfortunately, undermine and devalue peace efforts and create a climate in public opinion that any military intervention and use of force are justifiable.

A similar propaganda escalation against the FR of Yugoslavia and the Serbian people has also been noticed in the Turkish media. Bosnian Serbs and Serbia have been labelled as aggressors on their own territory; "Orthodox expansionism is being blamed for generating the war"; ethnic cleansing of the Moslem population in Bosnia-Herzegovina allegedly carried out by the Serbian authorities and supported by the FR of Yugoslavia including unsubstantiated mass rape of Moslem women is being condemned. In doing so, the true state of affairs in Bosnia-Herzegovina has been deliberately ignored, in which a civil war is being waged and responsibility can be at least shared, in order to justify the pursuance of some higher Islamic goals (establishment of a Moslem state in Bosnia-Herzegovina) and military intervention as a means to implement these goals. Such dangerous propaganda is fuelling a religious war whose elements, unfortunately, are already evident in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The Iranian media also conduct the campaign with the same goal but they go one step further: they explicitly call on Islamic countries to take a direct and independent action against the "Orthodox aggressor" in order to safeguard integrity and independence of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The public is constantly indoctrinated with lies, without any proof, or presented with disinformation in favour of Bosnian Moslems.

The protagonists of this propaganda campaign do not refrain from advocating military intervention, prolongation and escalation of war. This is in direct contravention with Article 20 of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. It is astonishing that some prominent statesmen and ministers make, and influential media in the USA, Germany, Turkey, Iran,

Austria and some other countries carry, statements or that the latter advocate in their own comments an armed retaliation against the Serb people in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia and the FR of Yugoslavia as the only way out of the Yugoslav crisis.

Unprecedented are also statements by many former, and unfortunately, some politicians currently in power "on the need for an immediate military intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the FR of Yugoslavia after the Kuwait model", on the necessity for a rapid and forceful military intervention by Western powers in the territory of the former SFRY indicating Serb-held positions in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the destruction of communications and airports in the FR of Yugoslavia or those on "the necessary form of military intervention against Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina and even against the FR of Yugoslavia if Serbs are not pacified".

During the preparations for the recent elections in the FR of Yugoslavia, threats were addressed through the media to the Serbian people that, if they did not elect those favoured by influential foreign centres a military intervention will follow. This is an inadmissible foreign interference and instigation to war and fully contravenes the basic principles of democracy and the Copenhagen document on free elections.

Special attention should be drawn to the propaganda intimidation of the world public that Serbs are preparing, in the next stage, "to commit an aggression against Kosovo", an integral part of the territory of the State of the FR of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Serbia. It is being ignored that a war can break out in Kosovo only as a consequence of an armed rebellion of the Albanian separatists and as a result of foreign military intervention, which would violate the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Serbia and the FR of Yugoslavia.

II

We also wish to point to the long-standing discriminatory nature and many harmful consequences of the propaganda campaign against the FR of Yugoslavia and the Serbian people by giving some examples.

The protagonists of this campaign have declared the Serbian people as the "international pariah nation", comparing them to a primitive group discriminated against in a caste society. In order to impose an isolation against and to ostracise the FR of Yugoslavia and the Serbian people, many information, scientific, cultural and sports links with them have been cut. Contrary to all principles of the UN Charter and the CSCE Final Act of Helsinki, the campaign imposed a ban on the flow of people and ideas and an information curtain was drawn around the FR of Yugoslavia as in the cold war period. (After 60 years, the "Politika" daily is prohibited to publish Walt Disney cartoons, scientific institutions and press agencies are denied subscription to foreign scientific magazines and other newspapers, the Royal Danish Academy decided to sever all forms of scientific cooperation and to deny scholarships to students from the FR of Yugoslavia, etc.).

Press, radio and TV broadcasts involved in this campaign have systematically applied double standards in the interpretation of the rights of the constituent nations of the former SFRY to self-determination, as well as in the presentation of events in the course of the Yugoslav crisis. Some media in Germany, Austria, Holy See, Turkey and Iran are most notorious in the discrimination against the Serbian people. They are occasionally joined by large circulation dailies in the USA, France, the Netherlands and other countries. For example, these influential media welcomed the proclamation of new States (Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia) as an achievement in the exercise of the democratic right of peoples to self-determination. They supported their immediate international recognition, blocking information warning of possible disastrous consequences which, unfortunately, proved to be true. The same media, while justifying the dismantling of the internationally recognized borders of the former SFRY, called, at the same time, for the inviolability of the administrative borders of its former Socialist Republics which are known to be arbitrarily drawn by the communist regime in the post-war period.

These media did not even inform about the democratic decision of the Serb people in Krajina reached in a referendum (Krajina is a part of the territory within the administrative borders of the former Socialist Republic of Croatia predominantly inhabited by Serbs) as well as of Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina (they account for 34 per cent of the population) that they wanted to continue to live in Yugoslavia, but accused them of

"the aggression against the newly emerged democracies". Thus, Serbs became a people who were denied the right to self-determination and to continue to live in their own State. They were accused of "aggression against" and "occupation of" the territories in which they have lived for centuries as the majority population. The world media and public rightly welcomed the pulling down of the Berlin Wall and the re-unification of the German people. It is absurd that the same media support the erection of a new wall separating another European nation Serbs.

The application of double standards, together with the discrimination of Serbs, has culminated in the campaign against the decision of the Serbian people in Serbia and the Montenegrins to continue to live in a common State, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The State in which "the pariah nation" lives has been declared as an "aggressor" so that the "pariah" could be removed from the UN General Assembly, CSCE and other international organizations. A lot of information proving that such acts were unnecessary was blocked or distorted. For example, the information that JNA members, citizens of the FR of Yugoslavia, left Bosnia-Herzegovina already in June 1992. At the same time, nothing was said about 60,000 members of the Croatian armed forces fighting in Bosnia-Herzegovina, although it was noted by the UN General Assembly and the Security Council. Information on arms embargo violations by Croats and Moslems and on foreign mercenaries and mujahedins in their armies have been disclosed only after a complete disqualification of Serbs as aggressors and the main culprits in the war.

Double standards and media discrimination were also used against over one million Serb refugees. At the time of the armed conflict in Croatia, the world public received almost no information that more than 250,000 Serbs had to flee their ancestral homes and find refuge in Serbia. The truth about the ethnic cleansing practised at the time in Western Slavonia and other areas whose victims were Serbs has only recently reached the world public. The public has not yet been informed that the Serb population in Zagreb and other towns outside UNPAs has been more than halved.

Even graver media discrimination has been carried out during the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Influential media have thoroughly informed of the tragic plight of Moslem and Croat refugees. Very few news on hundreds of thousands of Serbs who fled the atrocities of the same war to Serbia, Montenegro and Krajina have been released.

A direct consequence of such propaganda is that a million refugees are the sole concern of Serbia, Montenegro and the FR of Yugoslavia. Furthermore, the same propaganda machinery did not hesitate to impose tough economic and other sanctions and inflict isolation against a country with so many refugees.

Moreover, the nation which has received a million refugees has been accused of organizing - with the support of the authorities of the FR of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Serbia - systematic ethnic cleansing. All information denying such allegations have been ignored. For example, the fact that 34,000 Muslims, mostly women and children, fled nowhere else but to Serbia.

In order to further discredit the Serbs and the FR of Yugoslavia, a misinformation on the existence of concentration camps for Croats and Muslims in Yugoslavia has been launched, which proved to be untrue. Accusations that Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina allegedly torture thousands of prisoners by "methods exceeding those of Nazis" (US media mention even 70,000 prisoners), though unsubstantiated, continue to be topical in this militant propaganda.

The manipulations have escalated after new accusations have been made that Serbian people, Serbia and the FR of Yugoslavia are committing organized war crimes and massive rapes in the territory of the former SFRY. In TV programmes and some newspapers, Serbian victims were presented as Muslims and Croats massacred by Serbs. At the same time, testimonies and information on the suffering of Serbs, sent unsuccessfully by Serbian and other sources and agencies to the world, were not accepted. As a result of arbitrary political misconceptions, without any proof and basis in international law, some prominent Serbian leaders were identified as war criminals.

Double standards and discrimination were applied also in information on the destruction of cultural heritage. The news of the unspeakable devastation of the Serbian Orthodox temples and Serbian cultural heritage in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina could hardly reach the media because they did not fit into the already created image of "aggressive" and uncivilized Serbs.

III

The propaganda campaign against the FR of Yugoslavia, Serbia and Montenegro reached its peak with the satanization of an entire nation by spreading prejudices, misconceptions, untruths, national and religious hatred, thus discriminating against all members of the Serbian and Montenegrin nation and jeopardizing their human rights. The campaign, though designed to reach short-term political goals, will have far-reaching consequences not only in inter-State relations but also in the possibilities of normal communication between members of the Serbian and other nations.

The Government of the FR of Yugoslavia reiterates that such propaganda campaign is in contravention of the basic principles and provisions of the Covenant on basic political and civil rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the United Nations decision on the freedom of information and the United Nations Charter itself. The Government of the FR of Yugoslavia particularly underlines that any continuation, and especially escalation of such propaganda, directly harms the peace process initiated in Geneva and all other peace efforts aimed at ending the war and restoring peace in the territory of the former SFRY, particularly in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Such propaganda activity, especially when efforts are being made to bring the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina to an end and when negotiations are underway to reach a just and lasting solution to the conflict in this former Yugoslav republic, goes beyond the universally accepted international legal standards and is in direct contravention of the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Art.20), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Art. 4) and the Declaration on the basic principles relating to mass media contribution to strengthening peace and international understanding, promotion of human rights and combating racism, apartheid and instigation of war (UNESCO, 1978).

Such behaviour, that is, twisting and ignoring the true facts is also contrary to numerous UN General Assembly resolutions and decisions which explicitly state that freedom of information inevitably requires the readiness and ability to use them without privileges and abuses, and with respect of the moral obligation of unprejudiced seeking of facts and dissemination of information, while condemning all forms of propaganda aimed at planning, provoking or encouraging any threat to peace or breach of the peace or an act of aggression.

The Government of the FR of Yugoslavia underlines its lasting, asserted orientation towards a peaceful solution of conflicts in the territory of the former SFRY. It emphasizes in particular that cessation of the armed conflict, achievement of peace and ensurance of equal rights of the three constituent peoples in Bosnia-Herzegovina are priority goals in its efforts along the lines of the best interests of the Serbian people. At the same time, it confirms its commitment to respect for human rights free from national or religious discrimination, and wishes to recall that the right of expression, opinion, freedom of information and beliefs, through media, are fundamental human rights irrespective of borders.

The Yugoslav Government also confirms that it will continue to allow, within its territory, freedom of expression, receipt and dissemination of information and free reporting of journalists coming from all countries.